

## Contributions

### EASTER

R. R. TEETER

Easter: the festival of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This festival cannot be traced to the times of the Apostles, but it is evidently of early origin in the Christian church. In examining the history of the day, we discover that many of the popular observances connected with Easter are clearly of pagan origin. The goddess Ostara or Eastre seems to have been the personification of the morning as well as of the opening of the season of Spring.

The Anglo Saxon name of April was Eastmonath, and it is still known in Germany as Ostermonath. The worship of this goddess Ostara seems to have been fixed firmly in the life of the people of North Germany, and was carried into England by the Saxons. Its worship continued in many parts of northern Germany until the beginning of the last century. The celebration of the season being accompanied with the kindling of bonfires and numerous other rites. It was especially a festival of joy.

In seeking to convert surrounding pagans, the policy of the ancient church, in many places, was to endeavor to give a Christian significance to such of the pagan rites as could not be rooted out, and in this case the conversion was particularly easy. Joy at the rising of the natural sun and at the awaking of nature from the death of winter, became joy at the rising of the Sun of Righteousness—at the resurrection of Christ from the grave. The bonfires can be traced in the great "paschal tapers," sometimes weighing three hundred pounds, with which the churches were lighted on Easter eve.

While it may seem strange that these elements of paganism were allowed to creep into the church, we should not be too ready to condemn this seemingly catering to the customs of the pagans by our ancestors in Christian labors, for it is not difficult to discover the same principle in many of the plans and devices of the modern church, as it seeks to win the support of the twentieth century pagan—the worldling.

The most characteristic Easter rite, and the one most widely diffused, is the use of "Pasch eggs." There can be little doubt that the use of eggs at this season was originally symbolical of the revivification of nature—the springing forth of life in the spring.

The practice is not confined to Christians; the Jews used eggs in the feast of the Passover; and it is said that the Persians, when they keep the festival of the solar new year (in March) reciprocally present each other with colored eggs. From the Christian point of view this "feast of eggs" has been usually considered as emblematic of the resurrection and of a future life.

This is the thought, then, that should always be uppermost in our minds as we regard or celebrate the day, remembering that

God, "according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Were it not for the hope of the resurrection many would be driven to despair. That we need this hope and should be in earnest in teaching it is clearly understood when we learn of the forces at work to undermine the Christian's foundation.

A certain convention in Pittsburg declared, "The church finally seeks to make complete idiots of the mass, and to make them forego the paradise on earth by promising them a fictitious heaven," while a certain San Francisco paper says, "When the laboring men understand that the heaven they are promised hereafter is but a mirage, they will knock at the door of the wealthy robber, with a musket in hand, and demand their share of the goods of this life now." A few years ago a criminal in a German prison wrote upon the walls of his cell the following message for his successors: "I will say a word to you. There is no heaven or hell. When once you are dead there is an end of everything. Therefore, ye scoundrels, grab whatever you can; only do not let yourselves be grabbed. Amen."

These doctrines, in which the resurrection and the hereafter have no part, are pernicious in the extreme with a destroying influence, and should be met with the most optimistic hopes of the future for the saved. Christians, then, should seize all that is bright in the doctrine of the resurrection and make it count for God and man; should look forward to that time when we shall all "appear before the judgment seat of Christ;" should cherish the thought that the natural body shall be raised a spiritual body, the mortal put on immortality, and should rejoice to know that "Death is swallowed up in victory."

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### EASTER

D. C. MOOMAW

The ever revolving years bring around once more the most blessed of all the anniversaries, that of the resurrection of our dear Savior.

Early in the morning of that far distant day, the swift winged angel came to Gethsemane, the garden of sorrow before, the garden of joy henceforth, and "rolled away the stone," and the conquerer of death and hell and the grave came from the dark depths and opened the sepulchre to the light and joy of heaven.

Oh, what desolation, what despair, what deep, heart-breaking sorrow, what blackness dominated the lives of mankind before that blessed morning. From that dread abode of the loved and lost there was no voice, no greeting, no communion, no companionship. Into its unexplored caverns were poured floods and floods and floods of tears for countless ages. Hopes and ambitions and loves were all entombed there. Prayers, tears and wailings were all alike unavailing,

the grave was the last stage of human kind and the end of each and all.

Thenceforth from the glorious morning of the first Easter it is heaven's vestibule for all who live for God in the world. It is a place of "sweet rest" with angels and saints for companions, and an assured glorious resurrection to make the intervening rest the richer and sweeter. What a change, what infinite glory to God, what a priceless boon to us comes of the change.

Before that change came the children of the Lord rejoiced in the prospect by faith, now they are animated by the actual vision of its startling glory and beauty. Before that morning they "endured as seeing him who is invisible, that they might obtain a better resurrection." Now we work that we may with them "be made perfect," and the inspiration of an assured resurrection from an open an illumined grave presses us on in God's service to whom be all the praise and glory now and forever more.

### THE EASTER DAWN

W. D. FURRY, B. A.

To the poetic mind, the dawn has always been the most beautiful, the most spiritual and the most inspiring of all the phenomena of the natural world. It has always been the admiration of poets and the despair of painters. No imagination can be indifferent to it, whose light springing up from the dark gulf of night brings with it the new day. Who, when the opportunity came, has not early climbed to the summit of some mountains or hill that he might discern the "First red streakings of the morning light?" Who can express the joy that comes to him who, having spent a restless and sleepless night, beholds the darkness of night shot thru and thru with the first intimations of the day's approach. Sluggish, indeed, is the soul that has never been moved even by the contemplation of the dawn of day. The dawn is a daily miracle. This explains in part our lack of appreciation of it. If diamonds were scattered about us like the sand, we might admire them but would let them lie on the ground. If the dawn should come to us at long intervals only, its coming would be heralded, as in the days of the Vedic Hymns, with invocation and adoration.

Corot is our modern poet of the dawn and his "Orpheus" is both an inspiration and a revelation at Easter tide. The Harp, whose strings are plucked just at that hour when the heavens begin to whiten, breathes forth the true worship of the soul in the presence of the Infinite; and the noble figure with harp in hand and uplifted face stands for our humanity to whom the dawn has ever been the promise and revelation of the coming day.

Somewhat after this fashion, the poet has described the day-dawn in the east, and it finds its historical analogue in the dawn of eternal life out of the night of death on the first Easter morning. This was a glorious